

Food of the Southern Indian Subcontinent and Coastal Islands

South Indian food is largely non-greasy, roasted, and steamed. Rice is the staple diet and forms the basis of every meal. Coastal regions enjoy a bountiful harvest of fish from the Indian Ocean. Wheat, which is ground into flour, is used to produce chapattis, puris, and parathas—the delicious, everyday breads of the region. Coconuts and tropical fruits, such as bananas, mangoes, plums, and kiwi, are readily available.

South Asia is the home of rice. More than 1,000 varieties of rice are grown in India alone. In Bangladesh, about 80 percent of cultivated fields are used to grow rice.

Foods of Sri Lanka

The island nation of Sri Lanka, off the coast of southern India, enjoys a bountiful harvest of fish from the Indian Ocean. Coconuts and tropical fruits are readily available. For Sri Lanka, like its neighbors on the Indian subcontinent, rice is the staple grain.

In Sri Lanka, if rice and fish provide the backdrop for its delicious meals, then coconut and coconut milk are the stars and are used in many recipes. To add contrast to the spicy curried dishes, Sri Lankans make cool and fresh side dishes from bananas, mangoes, plums, and kiwi.

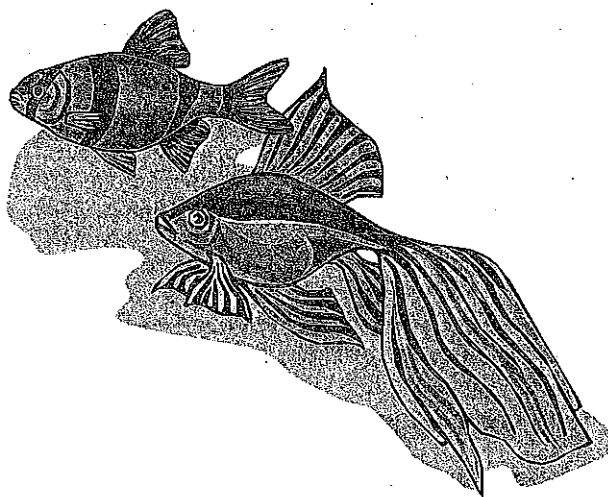
Importance of Side Dishes

Throughout South Asia, meals are served with many different side dishes. Raita, chutneys, raw salads, pickles, snacks, and sweets are all placed on the table with the main dish. Tea and warmed milk are served as beverages.

Taking Another Look

Directions: Answer the questions below on a separate sheet of paper.

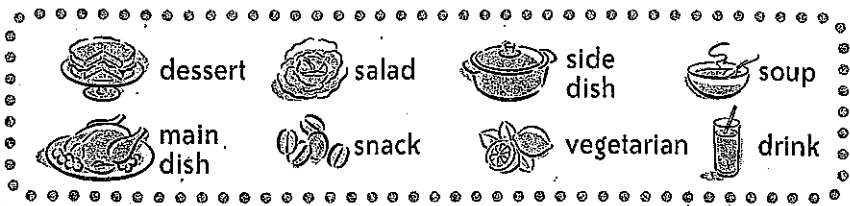
1. What is the staple grain for the Indian subcontinent and the island of Sri Lanka?
2. How do cooks in Sri Lanka add contrast to their spicy curry dishes?



Global Gourmet

Kolakenda, a porridge of brown rice and coconut cream flavored with the juice of green herbs, is the traditional breakfast in Sri Lankan villages. It is a modern nutritionist's dream of a perfectly balanced meal. Kolakenda is served steaming hot with a piece of jaggery — a delicious brown palm candy, and makes a very satisfying and nutritious breakfast.

Regional Recipes



Mango Ice Cream (Sri Lanka)

(serves 2 to 4)

Ingredients

2 ripe mangoes
2 cups milk or 1 cup milk
and 1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup sugar

Procedure

Wash, peel, and slice the mangoes (throw out the seed in the middle after scraping off the fruit). The easiest way to cut a mango is to cut lengthwise parallel to the seed. Combine the mango, milk, and sugar in a food processor and whirl it around a few times. Once the mixture is combined, strain it to remove stringy fruit parts. This will give the ice cream a smooth texture. Pour the mixture into two ice trays and put into the freezer. For best results eat soon after it is set.



Dhania Chicken (India)

(serves 4)

Ingredients

1 whole chicken cut into pieces
2/3 tsp. coriander powder
1 tsp. roasted cumin seeds powder
2 tsp. pepper powder
1 to 2 tsp. red chili powder,
according to taste
2 tbsp. ginger and garlic paste
2 tbsp. vinegar or lemon juice
1 tsp. oil
1 tsp. turmeric powder,
optional
salt to taste

Procedure

Mix all ingredients except the chicken in a large bowl. Place the chicken pieces in the bowl, coating each piece with the marinade. Refrigerate overnight. The next day grill the chicken until done. Serve hot with sauce or mint chutney.



Mango and Coconut Chutney (Maldives)

(serves 4)

Ingredients

4 medium mangoes
4 tbsp. ginger, finely chopped
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes
1/4 cup cilantro, finely chopped
1/2 cup shredded coconut

Procedure

Cut the mango into chunks. Put all ingredients in a bowl and toss gently until completely mixed. Refrigerate for at least one hour before serving. Serve as a condiment with curry.



Spicy Lentils (Sri Lanka)

(serves 4)

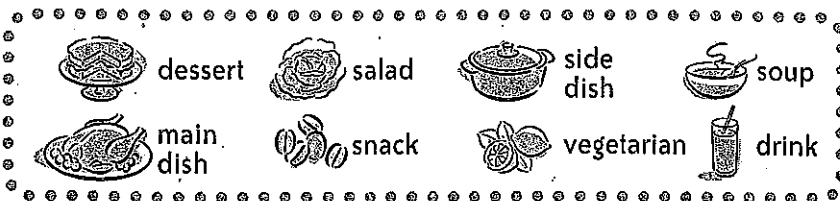
Ingredients

1 cup dried lentils
3 cups water
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. ground turmeric
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 onion, finely chopped

Procedure

Put the lentils and water into a medium-sized saucepan. Turn the heat to high, and bring the water to a boil. Reduce the heat to simmer, and cover the saucepan. Cook the lentils for about 45 minutes, or until tender. Stir frequently. Heat the oil in a heavy frying pan. Add salt, cumin, turmeric, garlic, and onion. Mix well. Cook about two minutes, or until tender. Stir the onion mixture into the lentils. Simmer, uncovered, for about 20 minutes. Stir frequently. Serve hot.

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